

## EVALUATOR COMPETENCIES: THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE

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**Abstract :** Why would you place valuing, culture, and cultural values at the centre of an evaluation competencies framework? What would it look like if you did? This new set of evaluator competencies from the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (ANZEA) is distinct from other competency and credentialing frameworks developed around the world. Why do we believe this approach is key to promoting high quality, culturally sound, responsive, and ethical evaluation practice in Aotearoa New Zealand? This article outlines the process for developing the competencies as well as the reasoning and powerful exchange of ideas underpinning their development and subsequently infused in the competencies.

**Résumé :** Pourquoi voudriez-vous placer la valorisation, la culture, et les valeurs culturelles au centre d'un cadre de compétences d'évaluation? À quoi ressemblerait le résultat? Ce nouvel ensemble de compétences d'évaluateur établi par Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (ANZEA) se distingue d'autres cadres de compétences et d'accréditation de titres développés à travers le monde. Pourquoi croyons-nous que cette approche est clé dans la promotion de la qualité de la pratique de l'évaluation adaptée, efficace sur le plan culturel, et éthique dans Aotearoa Nouvelle-Zélande? Cet article décrit le processus de développement des compétences, ainsi que l'analyse raisonnée et l'échange puissant d'idées qui sous-tendent leur développement, infusés désormais dans les compétences.

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Why develop evaluator competencies at all? What “problem” are competencies intended to fix? What should the competencies be used for? Are evaluators “incompetent” if they do not have all the competencies? Is credentialing needed to ensure competency? What should be included in a list of competencies—and is the answer different here in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ)? Who benefits and who loses in the adoption of evaluator competencies?

These were some of the many questions faced by the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (ANZEA) when considering how best to support the learning, development, and accountability needs of members and clients. The dialogue that ensued as the competency development process unfolded went to the very heart of what it means to be an evaluator and to the heart of what it means in a country that is bicultural at its very core, but with a multicultural overlay from our more recent history.

This article describes the thinking and process behind the development of the ANZEA evaluator competencies (the ANZEA competency project) from the perspective of four<sup>1</sup> members of the project working group (described later). A brief description of the Aotearoa NZ evaluation context forms the background of the ANZEA competency project. The project aims and purposes are then outlined, along with the concepts that influenced the shape and development of the competencies. This is followed by a discussion of the competencies development process, the challenges and tensions that emerged, and the factors considered important for ensuring the appropriateness of the competencies for Aotearoa NZ. The ANZEA competencies framework is then presented and its initial implementation outlined. The article concludes with a discussion of the factors that differentiate the ANZEA competencies from other evaluator competencies.

## BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE ANZEA COMPETENCY PROJECT

ANZEA was established in 2006 to serve and represent the unique needs and obligations of the Aotearoa NZ evaluation community. During and after the initial ANZEA establishment phase, members expressed a desire for the association to develop guidance for all those involved in evaluation, to help ensure quality evaluation practice.

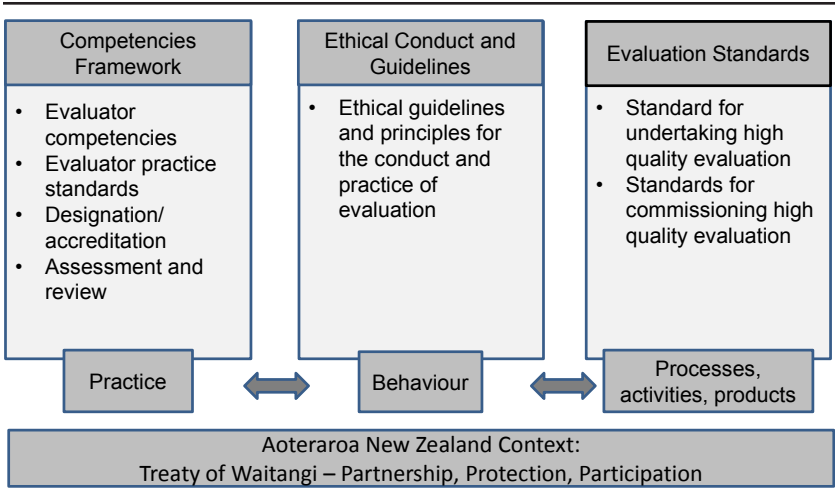
The NZ evaluation community is relatively small<sup>2</sup> and opportunities to gain evaluation qualifications are limited; for example, there

is only one evaluation-specific qualification available in Aotearoa NZ. Furthermore, geographical remoteness has historically limited access to international professional development and training opportunities. Professional development opportunities therefore are largely homegrown, supplemented with intermittent workshops from visiting international evaluators.

The desire for more professional development opportunities naturally led to the question “in what?” In recent years in Aotearoa NZ, there have been initiatives in the government sector to develop evaluator competencies to guide the recruitment and professional development of evaluators.<sup>3</sup> There has also been work that has focused on good evaluation practice as perceived by indigenous worldviews.<sup>4</sup>

The ANZEA Board considered that the development of a set of competencies would inform and support the development and tailoring of professional development offerings. It would also allow evaluators to self-assess their evaluation competence and identify their specific professional development needs. For ANZEA the development of evaluator competencies is part of a much wider quality strategy (illustrated in Figure 1) to promote and facilitate the development of quality evaluation practice in Aotearoa NZ, underpinned by the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding constitutional agreement of Aotearoa NZ, signed by representatives of the British Crown and New Zealand’s Māori chiefs in 1840.

**Figure 1**  
**ANZEA's Quality Evaluation Practice Strategy**



The initial focus on developing evaluator competencies recognized that ANZEA members already had access to and used a range of ethical guidelines<sup>5</sup> and evaluation standards (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). It was also an activity that could be kick-started relatively quickly and for which there was capacity and capability within ANZEA/Aotearoa NZ.

The ANZEA competency project sought to develop a set of evaluator competencies that (a) were relevant and appropriate to the Aotearoa NZ context and (b) would support the learning, development, and accountability needs of organizations, communities, projects, and practitioners in the following ways:

1. Inform the development and provision of professional development opportunities for people who use evaluation in their work;
2. Inform and guide sound and ethical evaluation practice in Aotearoa NZ, in a range of roles relevant to evaluation practice;
3. Provide guidance to trainers, teachers of evaluation, and tertiary institutions about the minimum or graduating standards for evaluators in Aotearoa NZ;
4. Act as the basis for a voluntary evaluation standards review process for evaluation practitioners;
5. Support the development of employment criteria or standards for various evaluation positions or roles; and
6. Provide public education and information about “good” evaluation practice.

## THE COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

A working group was established in September 2009 comprising three ANZEA Board members (the Convener and the Māori and Pasifika Development Portfolio holders) and three non-Board members (two as project co-chairs and one as the project writer). The competency project started by convening an expert caucus of 23 senior and experienced members of the evaluation profession in Aotearoa NZ, as well as holding discussions with visiting international evaluators. A review of current local and international published and grey literature was undertaken as a key input into the deliberations of the working group and caucus. The literature review focused on answering the following six questions:

1. What are the key terms and definitions around competence, competency, and practice standards for evaluators?
2. What is the range of evaluator competencies and cultural competencies (skills, knowledge, and dispositions) that have been/are being written about and used locally and internationally, and what does the literature say about different levels (e.g., emergent, novice, experienced, expert) of competence and practice?
3. What are the key issues in the field of evaluation that may affect the ongoing development of evaluation competencies?
4. Are there some competencies that are more essential than others?
5. What are the key issues in designating and reviewing evaluator competence?
6. What are the cultural imperatives that could underpin the development of competencies in NZ?

The working group developed the initial draft framework, and a series of regional workshops were held throughout Aotearoa NZ to obtain feedback from ANZEA members as well as the wider NZ evaluation community. An open forum workshop discussion at the Australasian Evaluation Society Conference, held in Wellington, NZ, in August 2010, was another valuable forum for eliciting feedback on the competencies from NZ and Australian evaluators.

Member feedback was collated, and the expert caucus was reconvened in December 2010 to consider feedback from the consultation process. Redrafting and release of the competencies was undertaken in 2011, and the competencies were released in September 2011.

ANZEA's commitment to recognizing the Treaty of Waitangi as providing the founding principles for engagement as evaluators in Aotearoa NZ was enacted in the following ways: (a) the deliberate positioning of Māori, Pasifika,<sup>6</sup> and Pākehā<sup>7</sup> evaluators in the working group; (b) appointing Māori and Pākehā co-chairs of the caucus; (c) facilitating separate Māori, Pasifika, and Pākehā discussion forums within the caucus; and (d) ensuring the inclusion of the range of evaluator roles in the caucus, for example, practitioner, commissioner, employed, independent, academic, and provider of evaluation training.

## CORE CONCEPTS SHAPING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANZEA COMPETENCIES

### A Focus on Use

The working group reviewed the literature and looked at various examples of evaluator competency frameworks from around the world and engaged in “deep” conversations about how the competencies should work within our unique context. We<sup>8</sup> began by defining what the primary intended use was for the competencies. ANZEA members had sent a clear message that one of the most important potential benefits for them of belonging to a national association was access to good professional development. The next logical question, of course, was “in what?” Thus, an important initial use for the competencies was to help ANZEA gauge what was most needed and desired by ANZEA members, so that the right mix of professional development could be offered.

The emphasis was on both *need* and *desire* because we felt the competencies should do something different from what we had seen in other lists around the world. The competencies needed to convey some clear messages about what kinds of knowledge and skill sets were important in the NZ context—and should be considered core to the practice of evaluation in Aotearoa NZ.

### Defining What Is Core to Evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand

To explore this notion of *core*, we explored two key sources of ideas:

1. The first was the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding constitutional document of Aotearoa NZ, which frames the very important notion of NZ as a bicultural nation founded on a *genuine and equitable partnership* between Māori and non-Māori.
2. The second, from an evaluator and funder perspective, was an analysis of *what it is that makes or breaks* the quality, value, credibility, utility, and relevance of evaluation in Aotearoa NZ. This included the recognition of values as an integral part of evaluation requiring values-based reasoning and evaluation-specific methodologies, as well as the centrality of cultural values, and consequently cultural competence, to evaluation.

Each of the core concepts is briefly discussed below.

*Treaty of Waitangi.* Distinctive to ANZEA is our commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Embracing the principles of the Treaty—partnership, protection, and participation—establishes our uniqueness as NZ evaluators. It also focuses our leadership responsibilities to ensure the inclusion and participation of indigenous perspectives and worldviews in the development of evaluation competencies, standards, and practices and the integration of these perspectives into the profession as well as into each piece of evaluation work.

Locating evaluator competencies within the context of the Treaty of Waitangi means (a) the Treaty articles and principles (partnership, protection, and participation) are regarded as the starting place for informing evaluation practice in Aotearoa NZ; (b) knowing, understanding, and working with the socio-political history of the Treaty of Waitangi relationships between *tangata whenua* (Māori, first people of the land) and *tangata Tiriti* (non-Māori who belong to Aotearoa NZ by right of the Treaty); (c) providing leadership in ensuring the inclusion and participation of indigenous perspectives and worldviews; and (d) inclusivity of all peoples and cultures of Aotearoa NZ.

*Values as an integral part of evaluation.* The development of evaluator competencies has required ANZEA to be clear about how it views and understands evaluation, which is that

[t]he concept of values is fundamental to evaluation practice, both in terms of (a) evaluation being about determining the merit, worth, or value of something and (b) contexts, evaluands, and all aspects of evaluation practice being fundamentally informed by value systems. It is the concept of values and evaluation-specific methodologies that differentiate evaluation from other activities such as research, monitoring, audit, etc. (ANZEA, 2011, p. 9)

This requires competency in (a) understanding the knowledge base informing the discipline and practice of evaluation; (b) applying evaluation-specific methodologies; (c) framing evaluation questions that are explicitly “evaluative” and designing evaluations that will answer these questions; (d) undertaking some sort of “values analysis,” that is, identifying and drawing from relevant values to appropriately define outcomes of value and program quality; and (e) “evaluatively” interpreting the information gathered, that is, apply-

ing the values analysis to the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of the information gathered to reach valid, credible, defensible, and transparent conclusions and/or judgements.

*Cultural values and competency.* ANZEA is committed to recognizing, honouring, and valuing the cultures of all people of Aotearoa NZ as articulated in the ANZEA *matakite*<sup>9</sup> (vision) and *whakatauki*<sup>10</sup> (proverb). The development of evaluator competencies has required ANZEA to be clear about how it views culture, which is that

[c]ulture refers to the shared living experiences of people. While culture is commonly used in relation to ethnicity, it also encompasses groupings based on religion, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, organizations, and institutions. Factors of history, socioeconomic status, and power relations, and differences within cultures, all have a bearing on the shared living experiences of people. (ANZEA, 2011, p. 9)

There is general acceptance that culture shapes and is present in all evaluation contexts (American Evaluation Association, 2010; Greene, 2005; Kirkhart, 1995, 2005). A common thread between culture and evaluation is the concept of values. Culture shapes values, beliefs, and worldviews, and evaluation is fundamentally an endeavour of determining values, merit, and worth (SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004). The authors emphasize this common thread in making the case for cultural competence in evaluation.

Cultural competency is central to the validity of evaluative conclusions as well as to the appropriateness of the evaluation process. Cultural competency in evaluation goes beyond conducting evaluations in culturally appropriate, responsive, or sensitive ways. It also means drawing on the values, needs, strengths, and aspirations of the culture of those a policy or program is intended to benefit to define what is meant by “good program content and design,” “high quality implementation and delivery,” and “outcomes of value.” (ANZEA, 2011, p. 10)

Consistent with ANZEA’s values and the context of Aotearoa NZ, the stated intention of the competency caucus and the working group was to ensure that cultural competency was a central component of the framework development and was not treated like a peripheral or marginalized aspect. The approach taken was to weave culture



through the framework rather than have stand-alone “cultural competencies” that might be viewed as optional add-ons.

Centralizing cultural competence in evaluation in Aotearoa NZ means (a) knowing ourselves as cultural beings (individually and collectively)—our roots, histories, biases, prejudices, power, and assumptions; (b) personal responsibility and commitment to personal development and education about different cultures; and (c) a willingness and ability to draw on the values of different cultures to appropriately and effectively meet key stakeholder needs. Evaluation is as much about who we are and where we position ourselves in relation to others, as it is about what we do (Greene, 2005). These core concepts helped to identify not only the range of knowledge and skill sets an evaluator or evaluation team might have, but also which ones should be considered fundamental to being able to deliver good evaluation in NZ.

### Diverse Competency Profiles

Alongside the notion of the core, the project team identified an important principle about how the competencies should be understood. We had not seen this made explicit in other lists of evaluator competencies from around the world, but felt that it was particularly important in our context. Lists of evaluator “competencies” tend to imply to the reader that “have them all” = competent; “any missing” = incompetent or not fully competent. We felt it was important to be clear that evaluators are *not* expected to have all the competencies. And, in fact, one of the great strengths of our profession is that we all have different things to offer.

Our view was that evaluators needed to be clearer about who they are professionally. No individual and even no evaluation team can be all things to all people. Each individual, each evaluation consulting firm, and each evaluation team has a signature set of strengths that makes it better suited to some types of evaluation work and not others. Further, both individual evaluators and evaluation teams will have strengths and gaps across and within the competency domains. We believe that this is a normal part of any evaluator or evaluation team’s professional profile and not necessarily a sign of “incompetence.”

With respect to professional development, we expect that evaluators and evaluation consulting firms will (a) clearly define their professional identities and who they want to become professionally; (b) develop and build on their areas of strength; and (c) address their

most important gaps through professional development and/or collaborating with others.

### Ensuring the Competencies Are Appropriate to Context

It was also clear that the competencies would need to be appropriate for the social, cultural, historical, economic, political, and demographic context of Aotearoa NZ. In particular, this included recognition of the diverse pathways to becoming an evaluator. (The subsequent use of Māori words or phrases in the competency framework is a further example of context-specific tailoring of the competencies to Aotearoa NZ.)

*Diverse pathways into evaluation.* Many of the evaluator competencies lists reviewed by the working group seemed to have an implicit assumption that the primary pathway to becoming an evaluator was via an academic route. Here in Aotearoa NZ some of our best evaluation work is carried out by people who have come into evaluation via quite different pathways. They typically bring non-academic but highly valuable skill sets. Evaluators in this country come into the profession with one or more of the following:

1. practitioner-based backgrounds (e.g., educators; social, community development, and health workers from government and non-government organizations and iwi/tribal organizations);
2. “life” knowledge and experience (people working to make positive changes in their own families and communities); and
3. academic knowledge and experience (in research, evaluation, and/or specific content areas).

We needed the ANZEA evaluator competencies to be inclusive of those coming from any of the possible pathways.

### TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING THE COMPETENCIES

Following the initial development of the competency framework, a series of regional workshops were held throughout Aotearoa NZ to obtain feedback from ANZEA members as well as from the wider NZ evaluation community. These workshops gave rise to a series of interesting tensions and questions that were vigorously debated and contested. They included: were competencies needed; would they

contribute to better evaluation (which raises the question of what is “good” evaluation); the respective impacts on the evaluator versus the commissioner/funder of evaluation; the freedom to practice and the professionalization debate; the role of culture in evaluation and the relationships to the Treaty of Waitangi; and, not least, how evaluation is conceptualized and defined. Each of these is briefly discussed in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Tensions in the Development of Evaluator Competencies**

<i>On the one hand ...</i>	<i>On the other hand ...</i>
What's the problem? <p>There was a questioning of why competencies were being developed, what was the “problem” they were intended to remedy and whether competencies were the way to address the “problem.” So the questions that emerged were: /s evaluation quality a “problem”; why and how would a set of competencies be expected to alleviate such a problem; what are benefits of developing a set of competencies; and how will the expected benefits flow on to both evaluators and funders/clients?</p> <p>The tension here is whether evaluator competencies are needed.</p>	What are the benefits? <p>“The good evaluation”</p>
“The good evaluator” <p>The competencies, in some way, define what we mean by a “good evaluator,” that is, someone with the skills and competencies they need to do effective work. On the other hand, a good evaluator does not necessarily equate to “good evaluation.”</p> <p>Underlying the discussion were some fundamental assumptions about what constitutes “good evaluation,” the need to be explicit about this, and the recognition that it takes more than a good (or competent) evaluator to produce a good (high quality, worthwhile, valuable, useful) evaluation.</p> <p>The tension here is whether competencies will necessarily result in higher quality evaluation practice overall.</p>	“The good evaluation” <p>The competent commissioner</p>
The competent evaluator <p>On the one hand, some expressed support for competencies for evaluators. On the other hand, others expressed a concern that without a similar focus on the competency of those who commission and manage evaluation, the competencies provide only a partial solution to the “problem” of evaluation quality.</p> <p>The tension here speaks to the issue of whether competencies are likely to lead to improved quality when other parts of the “evaluation” system are not being addressed.</p>	The competent commissioner <p>Professionalization</p>
Freedom to practice <p>On the one hand, the current situation (with no formal competencies or credentialing) allows for people from a diversity of backgrounds and professional expertise to practice as evaluators and provides a degree of freedom to practice because of the lack of bureaucratic constraints that exist in other professions. On the other hand, this same freedom provides ease of entry into the field and to any people who want to call themselves evaluators. This has the potential to give evaluators and evaluation a bad name. An increased level of professionalization would reduce the ability of unqualified practitioners claiming to be an evaluator because they will not be able to legitimately call their work “evaluation.”</p> <p>This tension here speaks to the issue of gatekeeping, that is, that competencies inevitably lead to the drawing of boundaries around what evaluators do. While this can be a good thing, it can also exclude new entrants and potentially emergent ways of practicing that ensure that our field continues to grow. One of the great strengths of evaluation as a profession is the diversity of backgrounds among those who practice it. There was wide agreement that we did not want to lose this strength.</p>	Professionalization

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The role of the Treaty of Waitangi and Indigenous Rights

## The meaning of culture

The ANZEA competencies have been developed with an explicit focus on culture. On the one hand, there was support for the Treaty of Waitangi as a key component of the framework in Aotearoa NZ, including acknowledging indigenous rights and the value of indigenous perspectives. And yet on the other hand, questions were raised about the broader meaning of culture (i.e., as it is applied to gender, disability, ethnicity, etc.). Some expressed the view that cultural competency is a subset of general evaluator competencies and is not central to evaluator competence (as positioned in the ANZEA framework).

The tensions here were twofold: (a) seeming to privilege one culture (Māori) at the expense of a broader understanding of culture; and (b) the prominence of cultural competence within the framework and relative to the other competencies.

## Who benefits?

## Who is marginalized?

On the one hand, considerable feedback supported the expressed benefits of having a competency framework, especially among those who were experienced evaluators. And on the other hand, others indicated that a framework puts a boundary around who can “be” an evaluator and who cannot, and will by definition exclude some who might have otherwise perceived themselves as doing evaluation or being evaluators. Currently this boundary does not exist.

From the community feedback, this tension was expressed as communities who know what the skills are to do evaluation are likely to choose people who can do a good evaluation for them. Also, the framework begins to articulate a view of evaluation that is much more than audit/compliance-focused, which is a very common view at street level. The contrasting argument is that it may very well drive up the price of evaluation, so that community groups can no longer afford evaluation, and it may further privilege the values of the predominant culture, and so continuing the inequity and injustices of the status quo.

## Skills, attributes and abilities

## Attitudes, disposition and commitment

On the one hand, the competencies express a range of skills, attributes, and abilities that the “good” evaluator should have. On the other hand, others say that a competency framework oversimplifies and “technocratizes” what evaluators are and what they do. They argue that evaluators are as much “moral stewards” as they are capable in the skills of measurement and analysis, and they question how the competencies take this into account.

The tension here is about balancing the specification of the technical skills and attributes of evaluation with the articulation of evaluation as a moral or democratic practice.

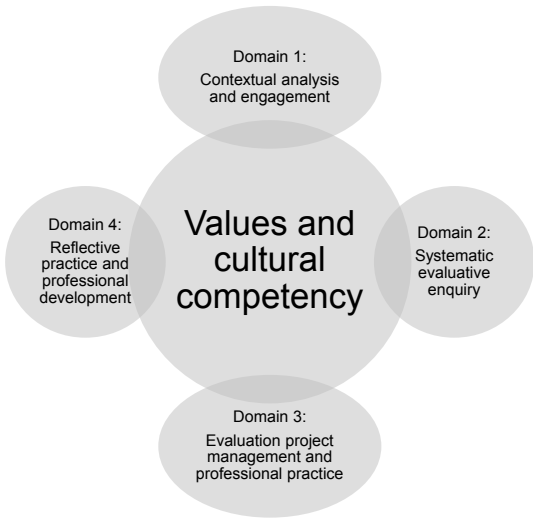
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The consultation with members reaffirmed the importance of (a) being clear about what is core to evaluation in Aotearoa NZ; (b) tailoring the competencies to use and to the local context; (c) allowing for diverse competency profiles of ANZEA members; and (d) maintaining a wide range of entry pathways into evaluation.

## THE ANZEA COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Figure 2 presents the ANZEA competency framework: four inter-related (and often overlapping) competency domains each with a list of competencies, that is, the range of skills, knowledge, experience, abilities, attributes and dispositions needed to successfully practice evaluation in Aotearoa NZ.

**Figure 2**  
**The ANZEA Competency Framework**



There were differing views about which competencies best belong in which domain—particularly given the degree of overlap. However, the domain groupings essentially stayed the same as those originally proposed based on the international literature and the moderation by the working group.

There were also suggestions that, given the comprehensiveness of the list of competencies, a non-negotiable set of core competencies be identified. It was decided that all of the competency domains are core. As highlighted earlier, the competencies within the domains are a menu (rather than a checklist), and each evaluation situation will require identifying which competencies are key for the evaluator(s) or evaluation teams to have.

Te Reo Māori (the Māori language) was used to describe particular ideas or concepts that were felt to be better or more fully expressed in Māori. However, this was not intended to confine these particular ideas or concepts to Māori; they were inclusive of all people. Table 2 presents a high-level description for each of the competency domains.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2**  
**ANZEA Evaluator Competency Domains**

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Domain One: Contextual analysis and engagement

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*Understanding the connections—people, place, and relationships: whakapapa (genealogy), whenua (land), mana<sup>12</sup> me te whanaungatanga (relationship)*

Domain One describes the abilities critical to the beginning of (and then throughout) the evaluative process, that is, being able to undertake an analysis of the context; engaging with people as part of developing an understanding of the context within which the evaluation sits; identifying the people, knowledge, skills, and experience needed to carry out an evaluation.

Competencies:

A demonstrated ability to:

1. Identify, understand, articulate, and take account of the wider context and situation relevant to the evaluation
  2. Provide as an individual evaluator, or form an evaluation team that has, both credibility in that context and the range of relevant connections/relationships, knowledge, skills, and experience
  3. Engage in respectful and mana-enhancing<sup>13</sup> relationships
  4. Bring the contextual analysis and engagement together so that the evidence, analysis, synthesis, and evaluative interpretation is credible and valid to the range of people (stakeholders) involved in and affected by the evaluation
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Domain Two: Systematic evaluative inquiry

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*Thinking carefully and critically about what, why, and how we do evaluation*

Domain Two describes the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to undertake a systematic evaluative inquiry.

Competencies:

A demonstrated understanding of the knowledge base informing the discipline and practice of evaluation.

A demonstrated knowledge, skill and ability to:

1. Design an evaluation
  2. Systematically gather, analyze, and synthesize information
  3. Interpret the findings and reach valid, defensible, and transparent conclusions and/or judgements and answers to evaluation questions
  4. Report evaluation findings in a variety of ways that are credible, useful, and actionable for the commissioner of the evaluation and others (stakeholders) who are involved in and affected by the evaluation, answers their questions, and is clear and transparent about methodological choices and evaluative interpretations made
  5. Provide critical thinking, and analytical and synthesis skills to the evaluation
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Domain Three: Evaluation project management and professional evaluation practice

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Managing all aspects of the evaluation in a professional manner

Domain Three outlines the competencies needed to manage an evaluation in a professional manner.

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Competencies:

A demonstrated ability to:

1. Manage an evaluation project
2. Develop collaborative, co-operative, and respectful relationships with those involved in and affected by the evaluation (stakeholders) and evaluation team members
3. Subscribe to and apply the appropriate standards and ethics that inform professional evaluation practice in Aotearoa NZ

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Domain Four: Reflective practice and professional development

*Learning and contributing to the profession and practice of evaluation*

Domain Four includes competencies supporting the development of the evaluation practitioner and profession.

Competencies:

A demonstrated ability to:

1. Reflect on one's own identity, evaluation practice, and expertise
  2. Assess needs for growth and engage in professional development
  3. Contribute to the evaluation profession
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Implementation

ANZEA has developed a workshop program to engage the Aotearoa NZ evaluation community in becoming familiar with and using the competencies framework. The workshop program has been designed to (a) demonstrate how practitioners can use the competencies as ongoing professional development tools; (b) profile the evaluator competencies and promote their uptake across the profession and sector; (c) trial the evaluator competencies assessment rubric and obtain input to fine-tune it for broad use; and (d) elicit information about areas where ANZEA should develop further professional practice development and support for members and others (e.g., evaluands).

The workshops are strongly participatory and discussion-based, facilitating a process of discovery, building on participants' existing knowledge and experience as the basis for discussion. Participants develop a list of their perceived top five evaluator competencies and then use the evaluator competency self-assessment rubric (see Table 3) to rate themselves in terms of their self-identified competencies.

**Table 3**  
**Evaluator Competency Self-Assessment Rubric**

Level of knowledge and experience	
1 Very good / Tino pai	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Highly experienced with very good knowledge/skills in relation to all the main dimensions of the competency.</li> <li>2. Few gaps or weaknesses and these (a) have no significant impacts and/or (b) are managed effectively.  <i>"I manage pretty well in most/all situations."</i></li> </ol>
2 Pretty good / Ka pai	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Generally strong experience and level of knowledge/skills in relation to the main dimensions of the competency.</li> <li>4. A few gaps or weaknesses but these (a) have generally minor impacts and/or (b) are mostly managed effectively.  <i>"I'm generally OK but have some moments."</i></li> </ol>
3 Needs work / Whakarīra	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Has relevant experience and level of knowledge/skills in relation to several of the main dimensions of the competency.</li> <li>6. There are gaps or weaknesses and these (a) have variable impacts and (b) may or may not be managed effectively.  <i>"I survive but definitely need to be better."</i></li> </ol>
4 Needs lots of work! / Aue!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Needs work generally with gaining relevant experience and improving level of knowledge/skills in relation to many/most of the main dimensions of the competency.</li> <li>8. Significant gaps/areas for improvement  <i>"Help!"</i></li> </ol>

Key features of the competencies are then discussed, including the structure, principles upon which they are based, and what ANZEA hopes the competencies will achieve. Participants then compare their/the group's collated key competencies with those in the Evaluator Competencies Framework, looking for areas of similarity and difference and exploring their reasons for the selection of particular competencies and not others. The workshops also elicit participant feedback on priorities for further evaluation-related education and training. Participant and facilitator feedback is collected from each workshop.

It is still early days in the implementation, with the launch of the competency framework in September 2011. The ANZEA Board has made a commitment to review the evaluator competencies and their use every two years.<sup>14</sup>



## CONCLUSION

“By us, for us, about us” is a simple phrase that sums up the ANZEA approach to the development of evaluator competencies specifically to take account of, and respond to, the unique context that is Aotearoa NZ. While the working group looked at what the rest of the world was saying and doing in relation to evaluator competencies and credentialing, the framing and positioning of the ANZEA evaluator competencies is grounded in the social, cultural, and historical context of Aotearoa NZ. The consultation with ANZEA members and evaluation stakeholders reaffirmed the importance of: (a) being clear about what is core to evaluation in Aotearoa NZ; (b) tailoring the competencies to use and to the local context; (c) allowing for diverse competency profiles of ANZEA members; and (d) maintaining a wide range of entry pathways into evaluation.

What differentiates the ANZEA competencies from other evaluator competencies is twofold. First, they place a specific focus on *valuing* as being core to evaluation work. Thus a fundamental component of our expertise as evaluators is to know how, why, and with whom to define what outcomes should be considered valuable and important and how “quality” is defined for a particular evaluation. Second, the ANZEA competencies are deliberately uncompromising about the importance and centrality of *culture*, *cultural values*, and the *Treaty of Waitangi / Indigenous rights*, which are both prominent and integrated throughout the framework.

The ANZEA competency development process has consumed considerable energy and resources for a small national evaluation association. However, the competencies are an important first step as part of a wider evaluation quality strategy, including ethical conduct and guidelines and evaluation standards, to promote and facilitate quality evaluation practice in Aotearoa NZ.

We believe that the competencies will be useful for the diversity of stakeholders who are pivotal to the conduct of evaluation in Aotearoa NZ. For evaluators, they provide a basis for reflecting on evaluation practice, prioritizing professional development needs, and identifying those competencies that are important in any given evaluation situation. For commissioners and funders of evaluation, they help to clarify expectations about what evaluators or evaluation teams might or should be able to do. We hope that the competencies will also inform decisions about the best fit between a particular piece of

evaluation work and the evaluation team engaged to complete it. For employers, the competencies support the development of position descriptions and performance expectations for evaluation-related roles. For providers of evaluation education and training, the competencies will help inform the design of curricula, courses, and professional development opportunities.

## NOTES

- 1 Nan Wehipeihana and Jane Davidson were co-chairs of the ANZEA competency caucus, and along with Kate McKegg and Robin Bailey were members of the ANZEA (competency) working group.
- 2 ANZEA membership has grown from 134 when established in June 2007 to 391 in June 2013.
- 3 The Ministry of Social Development conducted a project to determine research and evaluation competencies for researchers and evaluators in 2004, and more recently the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has developed a draft set of competencies as part of their work on the new evaluative approach to quality assurance being implemented in the tertiary sector.
- 4 SPEaR Good Practice Guidelines Project, see <http://www.spear.govt.nz/documents/good-practice/spear-bpg-maori-final-report-anzea.pdf>
- 5 Health Research Council of New Zealand (1998); Te Puni Kōkiri (1999); Australasian Evaluation Society (2002); Ministry of Social Development (2004); Hudson, Smith, Milne, Reynolds, & Russell (2010).
- 6 *Pasifika* is a term of convenience used in New Zealand to refer to those peoples who have migrated from Pacific nations and territories. It also refers to the New Zealand-based (and born) population, who identify as Pasifika, via ancestry or descent. The largest Pacific ethnic groups are (in order of size) Samoan, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Niuean, Fijian, Tokelauan, and Tuvaluan.
- 7 New Zealanders of European descent.
- 8 “We” refers to the four authors of this article who were all members of the ANZEA working group.

- 9     *Matakite* [vision]: We “look to the *maunga* [mountain],” we strive for excellence. We recognize and value the cultures of all of our peoples. We honour their participation and we seek genuine partnerships. Sharing exceptional skills and insightful knowledge, we seek to support their aims and aspirations for a healthy, prosperous, and vibrant future.
- 10    *Whakatauki* [proverb]: *He kura te tangata* [People are precious].
- 11    The competency framework and related documents can be found on the ANZEA website: <http://www.anzea.org.nz/>.
- 12    *Mana*: “(noun) prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma—mana is a supernatural force in a person, place or object ...” (from <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>).
- 13    *Mana-enhancing* (behaviour) is the expression of *manaakitanga* (hospitality, kindness) to others (Winiata, 2002). It is a practice or a way of engaging with others that cares for the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual dimensions of a person (Royal, 2006).
- 14    Review of the competency workshops and resources was on the ANZEA Board’s work program for 2013.

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